

ORAL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Only candidates who have passed the written examination will proceed to the oral interview. There are several things you can do now to prepare for your interview. A good way to begin is by reviewing the following:

BE PREPARED

- Research the position
- Talk with fire fighters
- Consider participating in the ride-along program
- Take a tour of a fire station

EVALUATE YOURSELF

- Your interest in the position
- Your appearance, grooming and attire
- Your attitude and demeanor
- Your communication skills
- Your professionalism

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT

- What do you know about the Los Angeles County Fire Department?
- Do you understand the duties of a Fire Fighter?
- Why do you want to be a Fire Fighter?
- Why did you choose Fire Fighter as a career?
- What have you done to prepare yourself for the position?
- What will be the most challenging aspect for you in becoming a fire fighter?

MAKE SURE YOU

- Are polite and courteous
- Make eye contact with board members
- Are honest in your answers
- Take time to think before you speak

Always Remember: First impressions are important. Also, proper business attire is recommended.

PREPARING FOR AN ORAL INTERVIEW

Preparation

1. Obtain a copy of the exam announcement and the classification specification (available from the Department of Human Resources web site <http://hr.lacounty.gov/>). Study both the exam announcement and the specification and be prepared in the interview to:
 - a. Explain the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the position/classification.
 - b. Match your experience to the examination for the classification and the knowledge and abilities listed in the “scope” for the oral examination.
 - c. Provide examples of personal or special characteristics, such as, willingness to accept increased responsibility and ability to work under pressure.
 - d. Discuss education, work record, self-development, job knowledge, training, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and/or supervisory experience (if applicable).
2. Break down the duties listed on the job description into smaller tasks and try to match your experience, knowledge, and training to these tasks.
3. Write out answers to the most obvious questions and to the questions you anticipate to be asked by interviewer as the result of breaking down the tasks in step #4. (Please see sample questions provided at the end)
4. Participate in practice interview sessions, with co-workers, family members, friends, supervisors, and/or managers.
5. Practice asking and answering questions with a tape recorder. You will probably discover that your responses are not as refined as they should be. Using the tape recorder will provide you with an opportunity to polish your presentation.
6. Get plenty of rest the night before the interview.
7. Dress appropriately for the interview. Wear basic colors such as black, gray, beige, or navy blue. If you need advice on how to dress for success, check your local library for books on the subject.
8. Arrive at the interview at least fifteen minutes early. If you are rushing to your interview at the last minute, you run the risk of being late.

If you prepare for your interview according to these suggestions, you will greatly increase your chance of making a good impression.

Your Presentation

As you present yourself, you must exhibit confidence and enthusiasm. You will need to show the panel that you can control your nervousness and that you care about this opportunity to present yourself.

1. In addition to exhibiting self-confidence and enthusiasm, remain aware of your body language and speech.
2. Sit comfortably in the chair and avoid fidgeting.
3. Make eye contact with the panel. Face each panelist as he/she asks a question, but look at everyone when responding.
4. Use the pronoun “I” rather than “we” when you tell the panelists about your work experience. They want to know about what you have done, not what your office or unit has accomplished.
5. Avoid negative terms such as “only” or “just” because they have a minimizing effect on your skills, education and experience, etc. Avoid any responses that the panel may view as putting yourself down.
6. Speak loudly enough so that the panelists can hear you.
7. Support your statements with examples. If you offer examples without being asked, you will show the panel that you have prepared for the interview, and that you know what you are talking about.

Panel Evaluation

The panel will assess your presentation based on the following:

1. The breadth and depth of the information that you provide concerning your skills, education, and work experience (was your answer sufficient?)
2. Your ability to analyze situations and take an effective course of action.
3. Your responses to the structured questions – **note:** the panel no longer sees your application or resume and has no idea about your background including education, experience, and/or training.
4. How well you understand the questions being asked.

5. Your ability to communicate.
6. How directly you respond to the questions (avoid skirting around an issue).
7. Your knowledge of the position.
8. Your display of genuine interest and enthusiasm for working in the position.
9. Your attitude and aptitude for accepting increased responsibilities.
10. The flexibility and adaptability of your responses.